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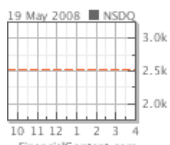
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2008 General Assembly had an eye on agriculture

By SHELDON BAUGH-State Representative

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Our Commonwealth has an extraordinary agricultural heritage and a strong agricultural future. Agriculture, after all, contributes millions to the state's economy each year and claims over half of our state's land.

Among the new laws that will take effect on July 15 dedicated to agriculture is House Bill 484. This legislation will help to promote the use of locally-grown produce and other food products by encouraging governing boards of public postsecondary institutions to purchase Kentucky-grown agricultural products.

We also passed House Bill 131 to aid goat and sheep producers in acquiring funds in order to promote their industry. Goat and sheep producers will be allowed to vote on levying a "check-off" assessment on their livestock which cannot exceed more than one cent per every animal sold. This legislation helps to maintain our role as an agricultural leader by recognizing the goat and sheep industry as another viable avenue of revenue for our farmers and producers.

House Bill 626 creates the Kentucky Proud Advisory Council and the Kentucky Proud Promotion Fund. The use of the Kentucky Proud logo and labeling statements will be restricted and fees will be assessed for certain participants to take part in the program.

House Joint Resolution 130 directs the Commissioner of the Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources to conduct a study on the growth of Kentucky's white-tailed deer population. Since 2006, there have been almost 3,000 deer/automobile collisions. The study is to examine the dangers that deer present for motorists, identify high impact areas, and to present ideas and methods that could be used to deter deer from the roadways. Findings and recommendations from this study shall be presented to the Interim Joint Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources by November 30, 2008.

Senate Bill 262 establishes the Kentucky Beekeeping Fund to protect and promote our Commonwealth's beekeeping industry. Currently, diseases and viruses are killing our bee population and if a solution is not found soon, our crop production will be greatly diminished due to the lack of pollination.

Much of what we accomplished during the 2008 Session can be credited to citizens who stayed in contact with their lawmakers. I appreciate your calls and messages and I hope you will stay in contact with me. I can be reached at home, through the toll-free line at 1-800-372-7181, or at sheldon.baugh@lrc.ky.gov.

- Sheldon Baugh is the State Representative for Logan and Todd counties.

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